

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. – 6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A method for producing hydrolyzed protein by subjecting a vegetable protein material containing saccharides to enzymatic hydrolysis, comprising:

(1) conducting cultivation of a koji mold in a submerged culture fermenter-type reaction vessel to obtain a fungal culture;

(2) mixing a dispersion of said vegetable protein material with said fungal culture to obtain a mixture; and

(3) subjecting said mixture to enzymatic hydrolysis first at a temperature ranging from 15 °C to 39 °C with aeration and agitation and then at a temperature ranging from 41 °C to 50 °C,

to obtain said hydrolyzed protein,

wherein a ratio of reducing sugars present in said hydrolyzed protein obtained is 5 % by weight or less based on the total solid content in said hydrolyzed protein, and

wherein the temperature is shifted from a temperature ranging from 15 °C to 39 °C to a temperature ranging from 41 °C to 50 °C when from 10% to 60% of the total period of time required for completion of the enzymatic hydrolysis has passed; and

wherein the sample in each of (1) to (3) are in a liquid state.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 7, wherein said vegetable protein material is selected from the group consisting of wheat gluten, corn gluten, de-fatted soybean, and treated products thereof.

9. – 13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 7, wherein said vegetable protein material is prepared for said enzymatic hydrolysis by a method comprising:

(a) pulverizing a vegetable protein material which exists at least partially in a solid state to a size of 300  $\mu\text{m}$  or less, to obtain pulverized vegetable protein material;

(b) dispersing said pulverized vegetable protein material in hot water at a temperature higher than 80  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ , to obtain a vegetable protein material dispersion;

(c) removing air bubbles from said vegetable protein material dispersion; and

(d) subjecting said vegetable protein material dispersion to sterilization immediately after said air bubbles have been substantially removed.

15. (Original) The method of Claim 14, wherein said vegetable protein material is selected from the group consisting of wheat gluten, corn gluten, de-fatted soybean, and treated products thereof.

16. – 21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 7, wherein said subjecting said mixture to enzymatic hydrolysis is first at a temperature ranging from 25  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  to 38  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  with aeration and agitation.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 7, wherein said enzymatic hydrolysis is completed at a temperature ranging from 41  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  to 50  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

24. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 7, wherein said subjecting said mixture to enzymatic hydrolysis is first at a temperature ranging from 25  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  to 38  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  with aeration and agitation, and wherein said enzymatic hydrolysis is completed at a temperature ranging from 41  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  to 50  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

25. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 7, wherein said enzymatic hydrolysis is first at a temperature ranging from 15  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  to 39  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  and is shifted to a temperature ranging from 41  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  to 50  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  so that the ratio of reducing sugars present in said hydrolyzed protein obtained at the completion of said enzymatic hydrolysis is 3 % by weight or less based on the

total solid content in said hydrolyzed protein.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 7, wherein said enzymatic hydrolysis is first at a temperature ranging from 15 °C to 39 °C and is shifted to a temperature ranging from 41 °C to 50 °C so that the ratio of reducing sugars present in said hydrolyzed protein obtained at the completion of said enzymatic hydrolysis is 1.5 % by weight or less based on the total solid content in said hydrolyzed protein.

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Claims 1-6, 9-13, and 16-21 have been previously canceled.

Claim 7 has been amended.

The amendment of Claim 7 is supported by the specification as originally filed, for example at page 6, line 23, page 15, line 5, and page 17, line 19.

No new matter has been entered by virtue of the present amendment.